

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 24, 2022

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

We write to inquire about the progress to date that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has made in coordination with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) over the past four months to implement the Deployment Locations Map, as contained in Section 60105 of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA; P.L. 117-58).

Specifically, this section requires the creation of a Deployment Locations Map within 18 months through an FCC-led interagency process to provide insights on the latest progress of broadband infrastructure deployment projects in one place.

This bipartisan measure passed on the Senate floor by a 95 to 0 vote during consideration of the IIJA. The unanimous vote reflects the strong congressional desire to ensure all federal agencies are coordinating on the funding they provide to support broadband infrastructure projects. In this manner, the federal government will be better positioned to avoid redundant network construction and maximize funding dedicated to critical broadband deployment efforts.

As you know, funding is available for broadband deployment projects across several different federal agencies. Each program at these agencies comes with their own objectives and goals to target how we bring more connectivity to all Americans. Some of these programs have detailed maps of where these projects are located and the respective stages of their completion. Some though, have none at all.

Absent a transparent overview of where this federal funding is going, it will be increasingly difficult for federal agencies to distribute resources where they are needed most, and without duplication. This is essential as more funding is invested in closing the digital divide. Additionally, as state and local entities navigate forthcoming broadband funding opportunities, having this information available in a central location will aid in drafting better deployment plans for those applications.

We look forward to your answers on the progress of your respective agency's role in creating the Deployment Locations Map, as we seek to ensure its timely and successful completion. We would appreciate written responses to the following questions by April 15:

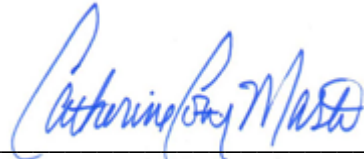
1. Section 60105 of the IIJA stipulates that USDA provide certain data on broadband infrastructure deployment to the FCC. Has USDA been in contact with the FCC about providing such data since the measure passed into law on November 15? If so, when did first contact with the FCC occur?
2. What is your current understanding of the interagency process going forward?
3. What steps has USDA taken internally to compile the data necessary for the Deployment Locations Map to transmit to the FCC?
4. To what extent does USDA have the necessary information readily available regarding the data of broadband infrastructure deployment projects funded by its programs?
5. What further steps does USDA need to take to ensure it has the appropriate information that identifies broadband infrastructure deployment projects funded by its programs, including project timelines, network type, geographic footprint, and respective speed capabilities?
6. What is your expected timeline for providing this data fully to the FCC?
7. What are USDA's plans to convey routine updates to the FCC on its broadband infrastructure deployment data, as required by Section 60105 of the IIJA?

Thank you for your attention to this important effort.

Sincerely,



Deb Fischer
United States Senator



Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator